



Humans vs Animals: Distinctive Viewpoints on Love and the Ethical Implications in Greyfriars Bobby

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian tentang korelasi antara hubungan manusia-hewan dan implikasi dalam Greyfriars Bobby karya Eleanor Atkinson. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menguraikan sudut pandang manusia tentang "cinta" dalam novel yang memengaruhi cara mereka bertindak terhadap hewan. Bobby adalah seekor anjing yang menarik perhatian kota karena kesedihannya atas pemiliknya, Auld Jock yang meninggal karena pneumonia. Ia menjadi simbol kesetiaan dan kasih sayang atas usahanya untuk berada di pihak Auld Jock selamanya. Pendekatan moral-filosofis digunakan untuk memeriksa isi moral novel secara menyeluruh. Metode kualitatif juga digunakan untuk membahas temuan yang ditemukan penulis dalam novel. Temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa hubungan antara manusia dan hewan dalam hal keterikatan emosional berkontribusi pada cara manusia memberikan kasih sayang, yang sering kali menghasilkan rasa tanggung jawab yang muncul untuk menjaga kesejahteraan dan kemakmuran satu sama lain..

Keywords: *Emosi, Greyfriars Bobby, Hubungan, Kesetiaan, Moral-Filosofis*

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the correlation between the human-animal relationship and the ethical implications represented in Eleanor Atkinson's Greyfriars Bobby. It aims to elaborate on the human viewpoint of "love" in the novel, which affects the way they act towards animals. Bobby is a dog who catches the town's attention for his display of grief over his owner, Auld Jock, who died of pneumonia. He becomes the symbol of fidelity and affection for his effort to be on Auld Jock's side forever. The moral-philosophical approach is used to thoroughly examine the moral content of the novel. A qualitative method is also employed to discuss the findings the writer found in the novel. The findings indicate that the link between humans and animals in terms of emotional attachment contributes to how humans give affection, often resulting in an emerging sense of responsibility to look out for each other's well-being and prosperity.

Keywords: *Moral-philosophical, Fidelity, Greyfriars Bobby, Emotions, Relationship*

INTRODUCTION

Love and devotion are timeless themes that frequently, if not always, bring countless stories to best-seller status. Many popular classics, including *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen

(1813), and notably *Romeo and Juliet*, a play written by William Shakespeare (1591-1595), have carved a lasting impact on audiences up to the present. However, the love theme is not limited to humans and can reach other living beings, even inanimate objects. As humans and animals acquire unlike cognitive skills and moral views, using animals to define “love” has always been interesting to delve further into (Meijer 26). Humans tend to underestimate nonhuman species' capabilities, thus often jumping to shallow conclusions that animals do not understand the term “love” quite well (Rowlands 87). Stories focusing on animals' experiences often establish a new perspective on how an animal might express affection towards other creatures. One of the authors who has explored related themes is Eleanor Atkinson with her classic titled *Greyfriars Bobby* (1912).

Originally, *Greyfriars Bobby* is inspired by one of the several versions of “true story” with the best-known version being John Gray, the owner, as a night watchman. On the other hand, Atkinson was inspired to write her novel using another version with John Gray as a shepherd. Although in her novel, John Gray is referred to as “Auld Jock”. It is a respectable term, possibly used for his old age and harmony with the local community. Atkinson's *Greyfriars Bobby* offers a sentimental perspective through the lens of a dog towards its beloved ones. Bobby the dog, who cherishes Auld Jock, must bear with the fact that his owner has died of pneumonia. Despite this, Bobby refuses to acknowledge Auld Jock's death and makes numerous attempts to guard his grave in Greyfriars Kirkyard, thinking of it as his duty. Although Mr. Brown, the caretaker of the kirkyard, initially does not want to allow any animal to enter the graveyard, he eventually softens because of Bobby's fidelity. He opens the gate for him to visit every single day. Ever since the news spread, the local community has provided food and shelter for him as they have come to admire his dedicated actions.

Animals have been used as significant characters in literature long before the present. Guroian (1998), in his research, explored how *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) personifies animalistic habits using human traits. For instance, the line “spring-cleaning his home” works as if the character, the mole, cleans his home the way humans would. Another example is in a study by Young (2019), who analyzed the novel *Beautiful Joe* (1893). The content is not only about a dog's grief over her murdered puppies but also about a mother monkey who carries her dead baby everywhere, highlighting animal cruelty. These studies are related to the current research in the context of describing animals with human traits. However, they are human-centered works and do not explore animals' unique perspective toward humans, particularly in conveying love, which will be examined in this research. The writer argues that the novel *Greyfriars Bobby* by Eleanor Atkinson uses Bobby's perspective to highlight the idea of the human-animal bond

by comparing it to the human perspective of expressing love and affection. The novel also indicates ethical implications and emphasizes humans' responsibilities towards animals as sentient beings. These ideas are illustrated through various evidence of Bobby's earnestness and how the community deals with the situation.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research method is used in this study to evaluate the ethical implications of the human-animal bond in *Greyfriars Bobby*. Two data types are used to conduct the study: primary and secondary data. The primary data is collected from the narrations found in *Greyfriars Bobby*, which is completed by reading the novel thoroughly. The writer also marked dialogues to gather the necessary data on moral values in the novel. The secondary data supports the primary data. It is collected from several books discussing morals in animals and journal articles correlated with the current study.

The moral-philosophical approach radically sees literature as a medium to teach morality and investigate philosophical matters (Guerin et al. 77). As one of the older forms of literary criticism, we may trace its roots to philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Horace. Plato emphasized the importance of moral virtue and utilitarianism in literature, whereas Aristotle stressed the ethical function of literature: releasing emotions and delivering moral lessons. Like previous notions, Horace believed that literature should be delightful and instructive.

The moral-philosophical approach may be suitable for *Greyfriars Bobby* due to what the story mainly reflects, which is acknowledging animals as creatures that deserve equal rights as humans. The approach will contribute to further understanding the contrasts between animals and humans in defining "love". In addition, the moral-philosophical approach will study the variation of human characters' interaction with Bobby and the indication of the human sense of responsibility that is evoked within them.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Perspectives on Love: Humans to Animals and Vice Versa

If a human only grows up with their kind, a concept such as love will likely be taken as love in "human relations" (Meijer 33). Humans are understood to have a wide range of emotions, especially in determining "relationships". One can experience romantic love, but one may also experience platonic, familial, and even self-love. It is presumed that these emotional complexities humans have become the reason for the case, such as interspecific dominance.

Delić and Fišer (2019) use the term “interspecific” to refer to anything that occurs between different species. The definition of “dominance” can vary according to context. However, here it is defined as the tendency to claim oneself as the priority of access to resources (Rooney et al. 68). Expectations of animals to behave morally are not quite considered. As a result, humans categorize those capable of showing moral behavior as “moral subjects” (Rowlands 87). This categorization proves that humans see the phenomenon as an anomaly, believing animals are essentially unintelligent. By this logic, most human rights cannot be applied to animals coordinately since it is considered unnecessary to control ignorant creatures. The idea of animals as simple-minded beings severely affects the way humans treat them.

In *Greyfriars Bobby*, Bobby is first introduced using his animalistic traits. He is described as a dog who can get thrilled by anything, runs happily, and barks without a second thought. On the first page, he is shown to be barking over the clock sound on the tollbooth in Edinburgh. “Bobby had heard it many times, and he never failed to yelp a sharp protest at the outrage to his ears; but, as a certain happy event always followed the gunshot, it started a train of pleasant associations in his active little mind.” (Atkinson 5). The narrative of the novel tries to approach the reader by showing the typical behavior of a dog, before transitioning into more human-like behavior. Atkinson also emphasizes that Bobby does not understand the concept of death by nature, like other dogs. “He did not know the face of death and, a merry little ruffian of a terrier, he was ready for any adventure.” (Atkinson 9). While this part is intended to overshadow the following event, it still proves that humans, in fact, generally think all animals are born with such a mindset.

As stated by DeGrazia in his review, *The Moral Status of Animals and Their Use in Research: A Philosophical Review* (1991), humans cannot seem to display affection for animals as they do for other humans. Animals perceive reciprocal feelings differently, unlike humans, who consider social interests within. If someone gives kindness by lending money, the other person will start contemplating their image to return the kindness evenly. Animals, on the other hand, do not think about this concept naturally. Since animals cannot comprehend situations the way humans do, humans' tendency to give above the bare minimum affection decreases, which may become the main reason for biased treatment against animals. This idea occurs in *Greyfriars Bobby*. Bobby is being an animal stops him from entering certain areas, such as the kirkyard. Mr. Brown in a strict manner forbids him because it is stated in the law, saying “Syne I will hae the law on ye. Can you no' read, man? (Since I will have the law on you. Can you not read?)” (Atkinson 59) when he finds out Mr. Traill intentionally leaves Bobby in the kirkyard.

Nonetheless, this notion does not intend to claim that all animals lack emotional intelligence. Wynne and Udell, in their book *Animal Cognition: Evolution, Behavior and Cognition* (2021), explain several cases of basic emotional experience in animals. They provide an example based on a survey conducted by Paul Morris et al. (2008), owners of pets from different species reported that their pets could feel emotions including joy, sadness, fear, anger, guilt, pride, affection, anxiety, and curiosity. However, some animals display certain emotions more than others. The study shows that dogs have the highest rating for experiencing more sadness (87%) and guilt (74%) than other pets, while fear is 100% experienced by horses. According to this result, it could be assumed that they highly depend on their natural habitat and survival skills when displaying affection, as most dogs can easily blend into human society.

In contrast, horses habitually must live far from human reach. Most animals consider giving love a survival instinct, not merely a feeling of satisfaction. Each animal's survival instinct may differ. For example, dogs instinctively crave attention and endearment to fulfill their needs.

Examples of this concept can be found in *Greyfriars Bobby*. As a dog who lives in a neighborhood surrounded by people and is attached to his owner, Bobby repeatedly shows sadness every time he fails to see Auld Jock. A specific example of the feeling of guilt in dogs is found when Bobby becomes depressed after witnessing Auld Jock getting yelled at for Bobby's misdemeanor. "The angry caretaker was instantly out of his little stone lodge by the gate and taking Auld Jock sharply to task for Bobby's misbehavior. The pious old shepherd, shocked himself and publicly disgraced, stood, bonnet in hand, humbly apologetic." (Atkinson 11). If we must specifically talk about dogs, many studies prove that dogs are emotionally complex creatures. The amount of emotions humans can relate to dogs makes them excel in many areas. They can have exceptional self-regulation, respond accordingly to human emotional states, and create long-term bonds with humans (Pierce and Bekoff 117). Their behavior resembles humans, which makes people in some way "tolerate" their existence in the first place.

Ethical Implications of Human-Animal Bonds

Providing care and protection automatically becomes a duty for humans towards animal companions. Acknowledging the mutual relationship between two species for preserving social harmony in the natural environment is easy. However, humans still struggle with the inconsistency of moral worth attributed to animals. They manifest themselves believing that humans are more valuable than other species and that unequal treatment of species with comparable emotional intelligence is morally justifiable (Caviola et al. 1011). Animals' capacity

to feel emotions heavily determines humans' attitudes toward them. The closer a species can relate to humans, the less consideration humans take to create a bond with them.

In *Greyfriars Bobby*, dogs are more tolerated by humans to show their presence in societies because most understand the concept of being civil. Bobby's grief over Auld Jock's death showcases his emotional depth, prompting people to treat Bobby as a human. One prominent example can be found when Mr. Traill is called to court for taking care of Bobby, who is still an unlicensed dog, as it is prohibited by law. He refuses to abandon Bobby and argues that animals should receive the same degree of kindness that a human can receive from another human (Atkinson 149). Bobby's unpredictable emotions, grief, and everlasting loyalty encourage society to change their views about animals. As a result, they commit to ensuring Bobby's well-being by licensing and protecting Bobby from any possible harm. The idea of collective responsibility is very apparent in this novel. The final part of the story pleasingly demonstrates how equality among species can be achieved. The burial of Bobby inside the gate of Greyfriars Kirkyard, where he fought to enter for a long time, proves that human compassion towards animals is highly possible to the point where animals are welcomed to cross the line.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that *Greyfriars Bobby* represents the connection between the human-animal relationship and ethical consequences. Humans are indoctrinated to believe in their superiority over any other species, which causes unfair treatment among them. While animals do not share the exact self-awareness with humans, this does not dismiss their social position as sentient beings. That said, emotional intelligence is the bridge that links humans with animals, motivating sentimental attachment to keep growing. Once humans acquire a new perspective on their relationship with animals, there is a chance that the treatment will reach a human-human bond in a certain way. *Greyfriars Bobby* narrates the relationship across species, which inspires humans to feel responsible for each other's well-being and encourages everyone to contribute to animal welfare.

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